

a banking institution here in New York, and, as it happened, by the same institution where Mrs. Tunstall kept her account."

"Then it is proved! He is the man!" exclaimed Pauline, triumphantly.

"No, it is not proved," returned the detective, shaking his head. "It takes more than that to make a conviction. We do not know that the note was presented by Horace Dupee, and even if we did it would still be possible that he had received it from some one else. No, Mrs. Kettle, we cannot arrest Dupee on that evidence. If we could find any pretext for arresting him, either on this charge or on any other, then it might be possible to complete our evidence as to this. But the power to do that is unfortunately wanting."

"Do I understand you that if any one brought a charge against him on another matter you could obtain a conviction on this?"

"I don't promise we would do it; I only say it might be possible. But at any rate I think it would do no harm if you would tell me all about your interview with Dupee and what came of it."

Pauline gazed at the inspector in astonishment.

"You know about that too?" she exclaimed at length.

"Why not? What is there so wonderful in that?" he returned, composedly.

"I suppose nothing seems wonderful to you," replied she; "but I confess I had expected to surprise you in regard to that! Well, then, if you know that I have seen him, I suppose that you know all that passed between us, also?"

"No, no," rejoined the inspector, laughing, "my knowledge stops at the fact of the interview. What you said to each other will have to tell me if you wish me to know it."

"It was in order to tell you that I came here," said Pauline; and she went on to give an account of the whole affair, the inspector listening to her with close attention. Her narrative was clear and precise.

"Do you think that he was aware that you were the sister of Jerrold and Percy Nolen?" he asked, after she had finished. "He must have known it. I was married only a short time ago, and my maiden name was in the papers."

"Does it not seem odd that he should have made this attempt upon a woman whose brother he had murdered? Murderers are usually more careful, if nothing else. I think we shall find, Mrs. Kettle, that he is innocent of that crime. As regards the robbery I say nothing; but I have never thought it likely that a fellow like Dupee would commit a murder so peculiarly cold blooded and comparatively unprovoked as that would have been. But if he was wrongly charged with it it is quite conceivable that he may have embraced this opportunity to revenge himself upon a member of the family that brought him to ruin."

"You may be right."

"I believe it will turn out so. But there is another point suggested by your story. It is quite certain that he did not know your brother, for if he had he would not have attempted to blackmail you on his account—or, at any rate, not on the ground that he put forward."

"Yes, there can be no doubt about that," Pauline assented.

"Then don't you see it has a bearing on the robbery? Your theory has been that he committed the robbery partly, at least, in order to have your brother arrested for it. But as he did not know your brother by sight that theory will not stand. If we consider him to have been the thief, his involving your brother in the scrape must have been merely a coincidence. Your brother happened to be talking to the lady, and his overcoat pocket happened to be the one in which the purse could most conveniently be dropped. If Mrs. Tunstall's husband, instead of your brother, had been in your brother's place, the evidence, so far as the purse was concerned, would have pointed at him."

"That is logical—I cannot deny it," said Pauline. "But it does not show his innocence of the robbery; it only shows that he had not the motive for committing it that I supposed he had; it was not revenge—it was vulgar pocket picking!"

"Well, that is as it may be. But let me refer to another point in your story. You said that the name he gave to your husband was Grush—John Grush?"

"Yes, but of course it was an assumed name."

"No doubt; but it is curious that he should have assumed that particular name instead of another."

"Why not that as well as any?"

"Because it is the name of another man—a real man, that is, a fellow who has been a companion and intimate of Dupee's for some years past. John Grush went with Dupee to California and returned with him. It was he who pointed you out to Dupee in the park, the day you first saw your brother. It was he who suggested to Dupee that it might be a profitable job to blackmail you."

"How did you learn all that, Inspector Byrnes?"

"I might tell you that I learned it by detective intuition, or some other sort of witchcraft. But the simple truth is that John Grush told me!"

"He told you? He is one of your men, then?"

"Not at all. But he has done me good service on this occasion, nevertheless."

"But . . . I don't think I understand!"

"It is such a thing as happens every day. John Grush was arrested last night for attempting to take a man's watch in an elevated train. It is not the first time we have had dealings with him, and when he was brought in he realized that he would probably be sent up for a long term. So he resolved to get even with a man who had 'gone back on him,' as he expressed it. And that man was Horace Dupee."

"They had quarreled?"

"Precisely. And the quarrel was about you. When Grush proposed blackmailing you, Dupee had pooh-poohed it; but he did so only in order to have all the profits to himself. Having got rid of Grush, as he supposed, he followed you about, and traced you to your

brother's lodgings in Harlem. What he did there you know. But Grush had distrusted him, and found out the double game he was playing. He bore him a grudge for it; and early this morning he sent word to me that he had something to communicate. I went down stairs and saw him in his cell. He told me of Dupee's bad faith, and said that I would find that Dupee had actually received money from you. I acted as if I placed no credit in his accusation; and upon that he went on and declared that Dupee had, a year ago, committed a robbery for which an innocent man was arrested. Yes, Mrs. Kettle, it was the Tunstall robbery that he mentioned. I asked him how he knew and he said that he was intimate with Dupee at the time, and that when Percy Nolen was arrested Dupee had laughed and remarked that it was a good job; he was glad to have done a Nolen on his turn, and that he hoped Nolen might rot in jail while he was spending the money Nolen was imprisoned for."

"Oh, the villain!" murmured Pauline, with dilating eyes.

"I told Grush," continued the inspector, "that I believed, if Dupee had had anything to do with the robbery, that Grush had been equally guilty. He denied it at first, but finally admitted that he had discovered the fact that Mrs. Tunstall was in the habit of going about town with large sums of money in her pocket, and upon my pushing him still further he added that he had pointed her out to Dupee on the morning of the crime, and had waited outside the jeweler's shop while Dupee was doing the work inside. According to his account, Dupee had not acted squarely with him on this occasion either; he had refused to give him a fair share of the plunder, but Grush had postponed betraying his dissatisfaction until he could give it some practical effect. He gave a number of details which coincided with facts that I had previously ascertained, and convinced me that his story was substantially true."

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Pauline. "Oh, my dear brother!"

"Wait a moment!" rejoined the detective. "We are not quite out of the woods yet! On making a review of the evidence at our disposal, I doubted whether it would be safe to charge Dupee's arrest on the robbery cause. If we should fail to hold him we might bid him good-by; he would never be seen here again. But if I could get from you a confirmation of the blackmail story, and especially if you could prove actual payment of money, then our course would be much simpler. We could arrest and hold him on that ground without any doubt, and the rest, unless I am greatly mistaken, will come of itself."

"I can certainly prove the payment," said Pauline. "My husband and the check are both in evidence."

"Very good; and now," said the inspector, lowering his voice and leaning forward, "let me explain to you a little plan I have formed for bringing this thing to a head."

#### CHAPTER XXIII. THE SHADOW LIFTED.

BY 10 o'clock the next morning all Inspector Byrnes' preparations were complete, down to the least detail; and there was nothing left to do but wait for the fly to walk into the web.

Horace Dupee, after receiving his check, put it in his pocket with the intention of getting it cashed at the bank on the morrow. But in order to do this it would be necessary that he be identified. This would not be a particularly easy matter in any case, and the less so because the name on it was not his own. At length he decided to get it cashed through some friend. He was reluctant to have it known to any one that he had had any dealings with Judge Kettle, and it was partly on this account that he had given Grush's name. But it was an annoyance and a risk even so, and he promised himself that he would not be caught with a check again in a hurry.

Late that night he succeeded in cashing the check over the bar of an inn in the lower part of the city, where he was lodging. The landlord of the inn was a depositor at the bank on which the check was drawn. This was on Wednesday. The next day, Thursday (the day of Pauline's interview with the inspector), the check was sent to the bank to be turned in with the other receipts. On Thursday evening the check came back marked N. G. Dupee was not in the hotel at the time, but he entered about 11 o'clock. The hotel keeper called his attention to the dishonored check, and demanded from him payment of the face amount. Dupee had by that time spent a good deal of the eighty dollars; but rather than have any disturbance he deposited fifty dollars, and promised to go to the bank the next day and have the thing straightened out.

But though he carried it off with a composed face, he was in reality filled with rage and apprehension.

What could be the meaning of it? A check signed by Judge Kettle refused at his own bank! Was it a mistake, an accident, or a deliberate plan? A mistake it could hardly be; there was nothing ambiguous in the wording of the check, and Dupee had made sure that the date and all the minor details had been correctly entered. The probability was greater of its being an accident. Judge Kettle might have inadvertently overdrawn his account. If this were the case, the matter could be easily rectified. But on the other hand, the third contingency remained—that the check had been stopped by special direction. If that were so, it meant that Mrs. Kettle had declared war. She had resolved to defy him. She fancied, perhaps, that he would not have the courage to carry out his threat and reveal her intrigue to

her husband. Well, if that were her idea, she would discover her mistake. He would reveal her shame, whatever the consequences to himself. He would blast her life; not only her husband, but the whole world should know what she had done; and if he suffered imprisonment for it, at any rate the time would come when he would again be free, and then he could seek her out and taunt her with her ignominy. For time would bring no freedom to her.

This bitterness of malice on his part was partly characteristic of the nature of the man; but there was in it an element of exceptional animosity. Almost all criminals who have fallen from a higher social position lay the responsibility of their degradation at the door of some person or combination of circumstances outside of themselves. So it was with Dupee, who dated the beginning of his misfortune from the day when he was arrested on the charge of murder by the father of Jerrold Nolen. Pauline and her mother were the only living representatives (as he believed) of that man. They should suffer a vicarious punishment. So strong was his desire to see this punishment inflicted that he half hoped Mrs. Kettle had really played him false. The longer he thought over the matter, however, the less likely did it seem that this could be the case. Whatever she might think as to the probability of his failing to carry out his threat, the possibility that he would carry it out was too serious a one to invite. Recognizing this, Dupee prepared himself for either contingency. He would go to Judge Kettle's office and inform him of the refusal of the check, as if he supposed it to be an ordinary business error. If the judge redeemed the check, well and good; the matter might stop, for the present at any rate, where it was. If, on the contrary, resistance should be offered to his claim, he would know how to defend himself.

It was about 11 o'clock when he mounted the steps of the judge's office on Pine street. The rooms were on the first floor; there was an outer office and two or three inner rooms opening into one another. Two or three clerks were writing in the outer room when Dupee entered. He asked one of them if Judge Kettle were within.

"I'll see, sir," replied the clerk, looking up. "What name shall I say?"

"Say Mr. Grush wants to see him a moment—Mr. John Grush."

The clerk went into the inner room and soon came back with the request that Mr. Grush would step inside. Dupee passed through the door, which was closed behind him. He found himself in a handsomely furnished parlor, beside the window of which Judge Kettle sat at his desk. The judge turned in his chair and asked him to be seated. "I think you were up at my house the other evening," he remarked. "I recognize the name and the face."

"You are quite right, judge," replied Dupee, assuming an easy air. "And it is on a matter connected with my visit to you on that occasion that I have ventured to trouble you now. There was a check, you remember?"

"Perfectly. A check for the sum of eighty dollars. Well?"

"Well, there seems to have been some difficulty or misunderstanding—probably the cashier at the bank made some stupid mistake; but anyhow, the check was returned yesterday, marked 'no good.' I thought you would wish to know about it."

"Hum! I am not in the habit of having my checks returned, certainly," said the judge. "Let me see; on what bank was the check drawn?"

"The Battery bank," replied Dupee.

"I will tell you how such a mistake might occur, Mr. Grush," said the judge, after a short pause. "I keep accounts at several banks. Sometimes one or other of these accounts runs out before I am aware of it. My wife has a separate account, which is at the Battery bank. In writing the check the other evening I may have inadvertently used her check book, my own account being exhausted. The fact that she had money there would of course not warrant the cashier in paying my check. I do not assert that this is the explanation; but it might be."

"To be sure; nothing more likely," rejoined Dupee. "But, at all events, the check having been returned, I suppose you will have no objection to writing another?"

"There would be some other considerations involved in that, Mr. Grush," said the judge, bending an intent look at Dupee. "May I ask you, in the first place, what this payment was for?"

"It was for a purchase made by Mrs. Kettle, sir," said Dupee, somewhat confused by this unexpected question; "a purchase at—at our store—I am a salesman there, and"—

"What store is it you speak of?" demanded the judge.

"Castellani's, on Broadway," replied Dupee, giving the first name that occurred to him, and feeling a little uneasy at the turn of the conversation.

"Castellani, the jeweler?" said the judge. "I know the place well. It was there that the robbery of Mrs. Tunstall's pocketbook took place last year."

Dupee bit his lips. But it was necessary to carry out his part, and he could not resist the temptation to aim a blow at the judge. "You are quite right, judge," he said, "the robbery for which young Percy Nolen was arrested."

"Yes; he was arrested for it," returned the judge, gravely; "but it has been discovered, Mr. Grush, that the robbery was the work of another man. That man," he added, fixing his eyes upon the other, "is known to the police and will undoubtedly expiate his crime. But to return to this check. How does it happen that the money was payable to you instead of to the company? That seems peculiar."

"Well, you see, I—I have an interest in the business and am authorized to receive payments personally."

"Ah! Still, as the matter, from a pecuniary point of view, concerns the company, and not you, it can make no difference if I cause inquiries to be made at Castellani's before writing you another check. As I have no personal acquaint-

ance with you, you will perceive the propriety of this precaution."

"I don't regard the matter in that light," answered Dupee, who was beginning to lose his nerve. "I am not accountable to the firm. I sold the goods, and I must request you to pay me the money."

There was a book lying on the judge's desk, and at this moment, apparently by accident, a movement of his elbow caused this book to fall heavily to the floor.

"The affair concerns Mrs. Kettle more directly than it does me," he observed. "I will communicate with her, and if she authorizes the payment I will make it." At that moment the door into the outer office opened. "And by the way," continued the judge, "here is Mrs. Kettle now. We can settle this thing here."

It was, in fact, Pauline. Her face was pale and grave, but her eyes sparkled like stars. Dupee knew not how to interpret her abrupt appearance. The look that she bestowed upon him did not tend to reassure him. But he summoned all his resolution and resolved to fight if brought to bay.

"My dear," said the judge, as his wife came over to him and stood by his chair, "this person tells me that the check I gave him at your request has been stopped, and he wants me to write him another."

"It was stopped by my orders," said Pauline, turning her eyes again on Dupee. "The money will not be paid."

"Why won't it be paid?" retorted Dupee. "Do you mean to deny that it is due?"

"I owe you nothing," she replied.

"Oh! we'll see about that! Do you wish me to tell your husband what it was you bought of me and paid eighty dollars on account?"

"I owe you nothing and shall pay you nothing," was his answer. "You are an impostor and a thief. Your name is not John Grush, but Horace Dupee. I have waited for you a long time."

"Never mind what my name is or what I am! I know what you are and what you have done! And unless you pay me, here and now, not eighty dollars but eight hundred, your husband shall know as much as I do!"

"Not so loud, sir, if you please," interposed the judge. "I don't think you can tell me anything about Mrs. Kettle that I do not already know. But if you think otherwise I am ready to hear you, and I fancy Mrs. Kettle will not object."

Pauline inclined her head contemptuously. "Let him speak!" she said.

"Oh, I'm going to speak—don't make any mistake about that!" Dupee exclaimed, beside himself with mingled fear and rage; for he was wholly unable to account for the security of Pauline's demeanor. "I'm going to speak, and what I say shall be heard not only by your husband, who imagines you to be a virtuous and respectable woman, but by all New York, or wherever else she may go. I tell you, Judge Kettle, that the sooner you turn that woman into the street the better it will be for your credit and reputation! She has deceived you ever since she was married to you! Let her deny it if she can! Let her deny that she visits a fellow—her lover—in his lodgings in Harlem, and drives with him in the park! Let her deny that if she dares! She meets him every day; he is a younger man than you are, judge, and better looking, and they laugh at you for an old fool when they are together. And they are together every day. I say, the sooner you kick her into the street the better, or you will have all New York laughing at you! I've got the facts, and I'll make 'em known, and prove 'em, too!"

"Are you prepared to maintain," said the judge, in a quiet tone, "that there is anything unseemly in the relations of the gentleman you speak of and Mrs. Kettle?"

Dupee laughed harshly. "Ask him," he returned. "Bring him and her together and ask them what their relations are!"

"I am fortunately able to do that," answered the judge, "because the gentleman in question happens to be at hand. I will summon him." And stepping to the door of the inner room, he partly opened it and said, "Come in."

The next moment the figure of a tall young man appeared on the threshold and advanced into the apartment. He was the very man whom Dupee had seen in the park and afterwards traced to the Harlem flat. But how came he to be in waiting here? What was the meaning of it all?

"Is this the gentleman you speak of?" inquired the judge of Dupee, indicating the newcomer.

"Oh, I suppose they have fooled you with some clever lie or other," said Dupee, with a snarl. "All the same, what I tell you is the truth; and the world will believe it, if you don't!"

"You seem to know so much, sir," answered the judge, "that you probably do not need to be informed that Mrs. Kettle was formerly Miss Nolen, and that she had two brothers. One of them died from the effect of injuries received mysteriously, while in the company of one Horace Dupee, several years ago. The other brother, Percy by name, was accused, a year since, of a robbery at Castellani's jewelry store. He left New York and was reported drowned; but the report turned out to have been an error. He returned to New York about ten days ago; but his presence was not generally made known, owing to the fact that the true perpetrator of the robbery had not yet been identified. The identification has now been made, however, and therefore the necessity of concealing Mr. Percy Nolen's presence no longer exists."

"Well, and what has all this rigmarole to do with me?" demanded Dupee defiantly. "What have I to do with Percy Nolen?"

"I am Percy Nolen," said the gentleman in question, regarding Dupee with a very stern expression, "and this lady is my sister."

Dupee saw at once that he had been outwitted and trapped. The check had been stopped in order to induce him to come to Judge Kettle's office; and it had been previously arranged that Mrs. Kettle and Percy were to meet him there and effect his discomfiture. There was nothing left for him to do except to retire like the baffled villain in the melodrama, muttering, "Foiled! but I will yet be avenged!" or words to that effect. Dupee, however, failed to grasp the dramatic opportunities of the situation; but he said, as he moved towards the door, "You have been known as a pick-pocket, Percy Nolen, and it'll stick to you!" With that he opened the door, and would have gone out of it, had he not been confronted there by a broad shouldered, athletic gentleman, with a brown mustache and piercing eyes, who was accompanied by a dejected personage wearing the familiar aspect of Mr. John Grush, the only true and genuine proprietor of that name.

The broad shouldered man, after handing Grush into the room, followed him and closed the door. "Good morning, Mrs. Kettle and gentlemen," he said, cheerfully. "Well, Horace, you see I have a friend of yours here. Jack has been complaining to me of you. He says you not only stole his name, but infringed his patent blackmail scheme. And so, by way of retaliation, he has been telling very bad tales of you. I'm afraid you are in for a good deal of trouble, Horace."

"There's no need of making a fuss about this affair, inspector," said Dupee, assuming a nonchalant air. "There's been no blackmail that I know of. It is true that Judge Kettle paid me a worthless check the other day; but there has been no pecuniary transaction, properly speaking, and I don't know what this man," indicating Grush, "is grumbling about. I know very little of him."

"He has the advantage of you, then," returned the inspector, "for he knows a great deal about you. I have been waiting for you for a year. I knew you'd be back here, so I didn't bother to disturb you in San Francisco; but I've got that thousand dollar note up at the office; and Grush has filled up any little gaps in the chain, though we could have done very well without him. Hold out your hands!"

The last words were spoken in a voice so different from the good natured banter of the foregoing sentences that Dupee gave a start and mechanically extended his wrists, and the next moment the handcuffs were round them. The moment after that, however, he seemed to take in the significance of what the inspector had said. He turned and cast a very malignant glance at Grush.

"You will find evidence against me, will you?" he cried, in a grating tone. "You did that job on the lady in the jewelry store, and put it off on him," returned Grush, nodding toward Percy, and speaking with a swagger. "You know it, and I'll take my oath to it any day. You played a low down game on me, and that's what you get for it!"

"You'll give evidence that I'm a pick-pocket, will you?" repeated Dupee, staring at the man with a strange expression, half leer and half scowl. "Well, you may do it or you needn't, just as you please; for I did rob the woman, and I don't care who knows it, now! But you gave it away too quick, Jack Grush; this is the worst day's work you ever did; it would have been worth something to you to have found out, first, whether I had any little stories to tell about you!"

The inspector, who had been on the point of putting an abrupt end to their dialogue, seemed to change his purpose at the last sentence; and the others present involuntarily listened to what might follow.

"You can't tell anything to hurt me!" retorted Grush. "I've got my medicine, and I'm going to take it. You can't change it."

"We'll see if I can't. I know something; I've known it for years—for years, do you hear, Jack Grush! I haven't said anything about it; it was too good a thing to give away—until the time came! It was a whip I could drive you with any time, and I kept it till I should want it. Little you imagined that I have had the whole thing, pat by heart, ever since the first time I was out of the prisoner's dock! I knew better than to let you suspect it. But I've waited long enough, and you might as well have it now as later."

"Blessed if I know what he's chattering about!" said Grush, addressing the company in general with an air of perplexed innocence. "I suspect he's gone off his head a little."

"When I left the prisoner's dock, acquitted of murdering Jerrold Nolen," Dupee went on, with intense emphasis, "you were one of the first to make up to me and say that, since society had kicked me out, I was justified in kicking against society and living by my wits. But, all the time, if I had been convicted, you would have let me hang, you hound, sooner than say a word to save me! and yet you were the scoundrel who crept up to a drunken man—hold him, inspector!"

Grush, in fact, had suddenly made a leap at Dupee like a wild beast. But the inspector's hand was stretched out like a flash and grasped him by the back of the collar with an iron hold. The fellow made one tremendous but vain effort to break loose, and then stood still, shaking all over, but dangerous no longer. The inspector gave a sharp whistle; a sergeant entered the room, and at a nod from his superior had Grush manacled in a jiffy and stood up against the wall. The inspector straightened his shirt cuff and said, "Come, Horace, make an end of this business; we can't stay here all the morning to hear you two scoundrels abuse each other."

"I say," said Dupee, with a sort of excited shriek in his voice, "that after I took Jerrold Nolen to the door of his house and left him, so help me God, alive in the stoop there, though so drunk he didn't know what he was about, that devil there came up to him and robbed him, and gave him the blow behind the ear that killed him! I say it, and I can prove it! And when he feels the rope about his neck, let him remember that it was Horace Dupee put it there!"

"Take them out, sergeant," said the inspector, abruptly. "I will be at the office presently. They're a pair of them,

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and, to my thinking, hanging is too good for either of them!"

The little audience which had been involuntary spectators of this violent and ugly scene drew a breath of relief when the door closed behind the two convicts. It was a long time before the nightmare impression wore off.

"That last turn was unexpected," observed the inspector, deprecatingly. "It wasn't on my programme. I think Dupee probably told the truth about it. You remember, Miss Nolen, I always doctored his having committed the greater crime. But on the whole I think we may congratulate ourselves on having made a very good end of the affair. You will not have to return to Harlem, Mr. Nolen, unless you wish to. And, on the other hand, when you go back to Mexico I fancy you will find no difficulty in carrying with you all the guarantees, social or business, that you want."

"Thanks to you, inspector," said the young man, with feeling, grasping the officer by the hand.

"Oh, no; that is where your thanks belong," the latter returned, bowing toward Pauline with a smile. "She deserves most of the credit for the successful issue of this affair. No sister, I'll make bold to say, ever stood by a brother so faithfully as she has by you. I have done little beside back her up now and then; and, if I hadn't, I believe she would have done the whole thing alone by herself!" and evading further thanks and praises the chief detective made a comprehensive salute to the company and vanished from the room.

"He's what I call a man!" said Percy.

"And a general!" added the judge.

Pauline said in a whisper, "God bless him!"

Judge Kettle and his beautiful wife continue to live in New York, and now that the shadow is lifted from them they are the sunny center of a charming society. Mrs. Nolen lives with them, in the enjoyment of a serene old age. Percy returned to Mexico, and is still living there, having become quite wealthy; and his betrothal is reported to the daughter of one of the chief men in the government. Mrs. Valentine Martin is believed to be in England, intriguing, without much prospect of success, for the possession of her late husband's estates. Dupee is behind the bars; Grush contrived to cheat the gallows. Inspector Byrnes is hard at work, but hard work agrees with him.

THE END.

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